

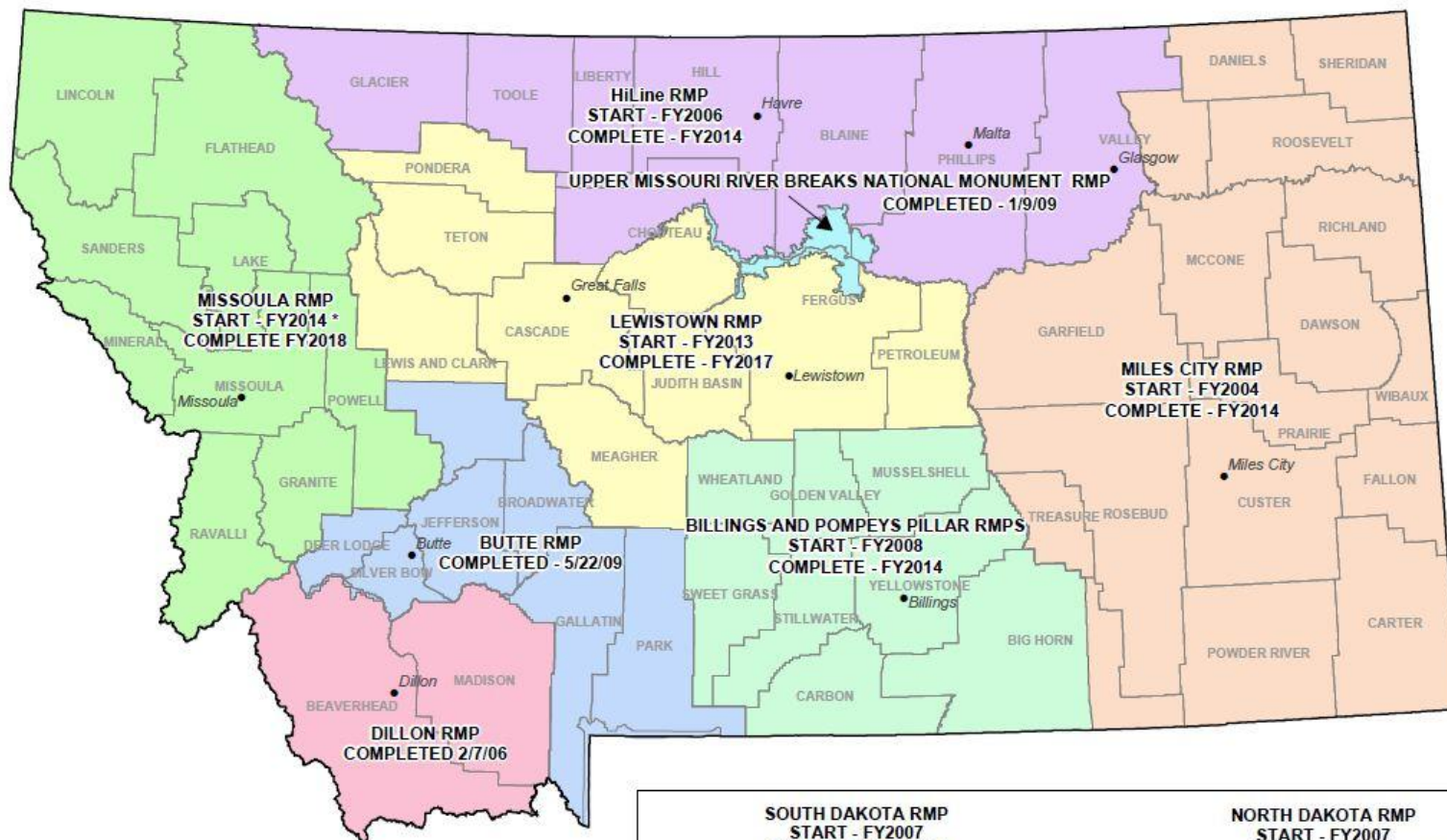
# BLM SAGE GROUSE PLANNING

**Montana Sage-Grouse Habitat  
Conservation Advisory Council**

**July 16-17, 2013**



# ONGOING & FUTURE LAND USE PLANNING BOUNDARIES MONTANA/DAKOTAS



**SOUTH DAKOTA RMP**  
START - FY2007  
COMPLETE - FY2014



**SOUTH DAKOTA**

**NORTH DAKOTA RMP**  
START - FY2007



**NORTH DAKOTA**





# Resource Management Plans (RMP)

## An RMP:

Describes broad multiple-use direction for BLM-administered public lands that focuses on what resource conditions, uses and visitor experiences should be achieved and maintained over time.

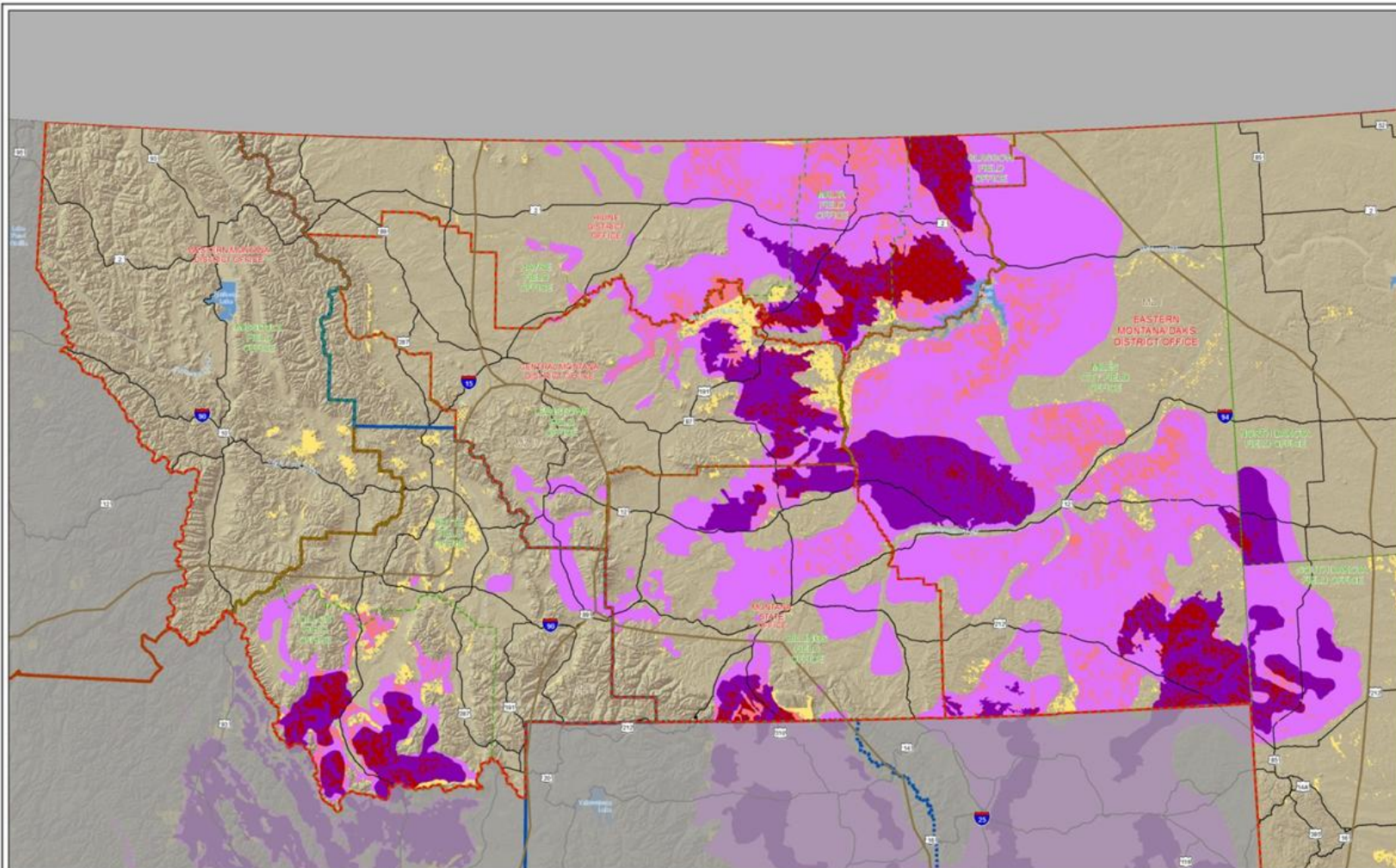
Establishes desired outcomes (goals and objectives) for resource management and includes measurable steps, management actions, and allowable uses to achieve the desired outcomes.

Provides the framework for subsequent implementation decisions carried-out through project specific or activity level plans.

- An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) accompanies the RMP to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the environmental issues and impacts for the alternatives analyzed in detail.



# Montana/Dakotas BLM Lands and PPH & PGH



## Montana & The Dakotas Greater Sage-Grouse Preliminary Priority Habitat, Preliminary General Habitat and BLM Managed Lands - May 2012 -

### Legend

- Preliminary Priority Habitat (PPH)
- Preliminary General Habitat (PGH)
- PPH on BLM Managed Lands
- PGH on BLM Managed Lands
- BLM Managed Lands
- BLM Field Office Boundary
- BLM District Office Boundary
- Rocky Mountain SG Planning Region
- Rocky Mountain SG Planning Sub-Regions
- Great Basin SG Planning Region
- Great Basin SG Planning Sub-Regions
- WAFWA SG Management Zones

### Data Sources:

**Montana - PPH:** FINAL DRAFT; Developed by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and reviewed by Montana BLM.  
**PGH:** FINAL DRAFT; Distribution of Sage-Grouse in North America. Schroeder et al., 2004.

**North Dakota - PPH:** FINAL DRAFT; Developed by North Dakota Game and Fish Department in cooperation with Montana/Dakotas BLM. **PGH:** FINAL DRAFT; Distribution of Sage-Grouse in North America. Schroeder et al., 2004.

**South Dakota - PPH and PGH:** FINAL DRAFT; Acquired from Montana BLM.

**BLM Managed Lands:** NCC GSSP Interim National SMA, accessed on 05-18-2012.

**BLM Sage-Grouse Planning Regions and Sub-Regions:** Sage-Grouse Planning Team

**WAFWA Management Zones:** Version 2 10-18-2006

**BLM Field and District Office Boundaries for MT, BLM MT/Dakotas State Office**





# RMP Decisions

- Wildland Fire Management
- Invasive Species



# RMP Decisions

- Wildland Fire Management
- Invasive Species



## Wildland Fire Management

### Land Use Plan Decisions.

- Fire management strategies must recognize the **role of wildland fire** as an essential **ecological process** and natural change agent.
- Fire management decisions must reflect that the **protection of human life is the single, overriding priority**.
- **Other priorities** (protecting human communities and community infrastructure, other property and improvements, and natural and cultural resources) are based on the **values to be protected, human health and safety**.
- Identify management actions to achieve the **fire management goals** and objectives, and support the goals and objectives for **vegetation, wildlife, and other resources**.





## Wildland Fire Management

- Identify the **types of fuels management or vegetation management treatments** (e.g., mechanical, biological, and chemical treatments and prescribed fire) that would be implemented.
- Include the **identification of restrictions** on fire management practices (including both wildfire suppression and fuels management) needed **to protect natural or cultural resource values**.
- **Establish landscape-scale fire management priorities or provide criteria that will guide more site-specific priorities at the fire management plan level.**





## National Technical Team (NTT)

### National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures/Planning Strategy

#### Wildfire Suppression, Fuels Management and Fire Rehabilitation

These programs address the threats resulting from **wildfires** and **post-wildfire effects** along with a program (**fuels management**) designed to try to reduce these impacts. Together these programs provide a significant opportunity to influence sagebrush habitats that benefit sage-grouse. It is critical not only to **conduct management actions that reduce the long-term loss of sagebrush but also to restore and recover burned areas to habitats** that will be used by sage-grouse.



National Technical Team (NTT)

National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures/Planning Strategy

Fuels Management

Priority sage-grouse habitat areas

- Design and implement fuels treatments with an emphasis on **protecting existing sagebrush ecosystems.**
- **Do not reduce sagebrush canopy cover to less than 15%** (Connelly et al. 2000, Hagen et al. 2007) unless a fuels management objective requires additional reduction in sagebrush cover to meet strategic protection of priority sage-grouse habitat and conserve habitat quality for the species. **Closely evaluate the benefits of the fuel break against the additional loss of sagebrush cover in the EA process.**
- **Apply appropriate seasonal restrictions** for implementing fuels management treatments according to the type of seasonal habitats present in a priority area.





## National Technical Team (NTT)

### National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures/Planning Strategy

#### Fuels Management

##### Priority sage-grouse habitat areas

- **Allow no treatments in known winter range** unless the treatments are designed to strategically reduce wildfire risk around or in the winter range and will maintain winter range habitat quality.
- **Do not use fire to treat sagebrush in less than 12-inch precipitation zones.** However, if as a last resort and after all other treatment opportunities have been explored and site specific variables allow, the use of prescribed fire for fuel breaks that would disrupt the fuel continuity across the landscape could be considered, in stands where cheatgrass is a very minor component in the understory.



## National Technical Team (NTT)

### National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures/Planning Strategy

#### Fuels Management

- **Monitor and control invasive vegetation** post-treatment.
- **Rest treated areas from grazing for two full growing seasons** unless vegetation recovery dictates otherwise.
- **Require use of native seeds for fuels management treatment** based on availability, adaptation (site potential), and probability of success (Richards et al. 1998). Where probability of success or native seed availability is low, non-native seeds may be used as long as they meet sage-grouse habitat objectives.





National Technical Team (NTT)

National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures/Planning Strategy

Fuels Management

Priority sage-grouse habitat areas

- Design post fuels management projects to ensure long term persistence of seeded or pretreatment native plants. This may require temporary or long-term changes in livestock grazing management, wild horse and burro management, travel management, or other activities to achieve and maintain the desired condition of the fuels management project.
- Design fuels management projects in priority sage-grouse habitat to strategically and effectively reduce wildfire threats in the greatest area.
- During fuels management project design, consider the utility of using livestock to strategically reduce fine fuels, and implement grazing management that will accomplish this objective. Consult with ecologists to minimize impacts to native perennial grasses.



## National Technical Team (NTT)

### National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures/Planning Strategy

#### Fire Operations

- In priority sage-grouse habitat areas, prioritize suppression, immediately after life and property, to conserve the habitat.
- In general sage-grouse habitat, prioritize suppression where wildfires threaten priority sage-grouse habitat.





National Technical Team (NTT)  
National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures/Planning Strategy  
Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ES&R)

- Prioritize native seed allocation for use in sage-grouse habitat
- Design post ES&R management to ensure long term persistence of seeded or pre-burn native plants.
- Consider potential changes in climate.



# Range of Alternatives for **Fire Management**

in BLM Resource Management Plan revisions and amendments in Montana

The BLM uses Fire Management Units (FMUs), fire management categories, and the Fire Management Plan (FMP) (BLM 2004a) to summarize guidance for fire and fuels management actions on BLM lands (FMPs are updated annually).

## **Fire Management Categories:**

Category A: Fire is not desired at all.

Category B: Unplanned fire is likely to cause negative effects.

Category C: Fire is desired to manage ecosystems, but current conditions create constraints on use.

Category D: Fire is desired; no constraints on its use.





## Range of Alternatives for Fire Management

in BLM Resource Management Plan revisions and amendments in Montana

- The BLM will protect sensitive status species habitat (such as sage-grouse) during suppression and prescribed fire activities as described in the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations and the current fire management plan.
- Fire management-related activities, including prescribed fire, should preserve or enhance the habitat quality for sage-grouse and other sensitive status species, especially in priority habitat areas, and would be subject to mitigation measures and conservation actions for greater sage-grouse habitat.
- Where applicable, the BLM will use best management practices to design fuels treatment objectives to protect existing sagebrush ecosystems, modify fire behavior, restore native plants, and create landscape patterns which benefit sage-grouse habitat .
- The use of heavy equipment during wildfire suppression and rehabilitation is allowable in sage-grouse habitat although cross-country travel should be limited through these areas. Wildfire suppression facilities shall be located to the extent possible in areas that minimize disturbance to high quality sage-grouse habitat.



# RMP Fire Decisions

- Wildland Fire Management
- Invasive Species





# Invasive Species Land Use Plan Decisions

No land use plan decisions address specific invasive species—

Control of invasive species is an implementation action used to achieve vegetation and habitat goals and objectives.

No specific NTT guidance.

LUP Goal - Manage for healthy native plant communities and desirable nonnative plant communities by reducing, preventing expansion of, or eliminating the occurrence of undesirable invasive species.



Land use plan decisions address priority areas for treatment, standard operating procedures, treatment limitations

- Priority Area Examples-special status species habitat, riparian areas, high use recreation areas
- Standard Operating Procedure Examples-Only certified weed seed free forage or material may be authorized, weed management prescriptions required for ground disturbance authorizations
- Treatment Limitation Examples- Aerial spraying buffers on riparian areas or special status plant species habitat, hand spray herbicides in areas of special status species





Pest management would utilize Integrated Weed/Pest Management and work within federal guidelines, laws, statutes, plans, and regulations to manage infestations of invasive species on the BLM, Montana, and local invasive species lists.

- Education and awareness for staff, cooperators, and the public
- Prevention, early detection and rapid response for all noxious weed species
- Inventory of public and cooperator lands for noxious weeds
- Control of noxious weeds by various methods that include cultural, physical, biological, and chemical controls or other land practices
- Monitoring of treatment areas

